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Communicative Competence and Pragmatics

Communicative Competence:

1. David Crystal's Definition.

Communicative competence is “A person’s unconscious knowledge of the rules governing the appropriate use of language in social situations. It usually contrasts with linguistic competence, the person’s unconscious knowledge of the formal patterning of language.

Communicative competence includes our formal knowledge of language, but in addition includes our awareness of the factors which govern acceptable speech, such as how to begin and end conversations, how to interrupt, how to address people, and how to behave in special speech situations (e. g. apologizing, thanking, and expressing formality or informality.”

2. Dell Hymes' Communicative Competence.

Hymes, referring to Chomsky’s concept of linguistic competence, states that for language to be used to exchange information, ideas or feelings, the speaker must possess both the capacity to construct grammatically correct sentences- ***linguistic competence***-but also the competence to produce socially pertinent utterances. Communication, then, depends on communicative competence and it can be seen as inclusive of:

- A. ***A Linguistic Component:*** the mastery of the linguistic (syntactical-morphological, semantic and phonological) rules.
- B. ***A Discursive Component:*** a knowledge and understanding of different types of discourse and of their organization as a function of the situation of communication within which they are produced.
- C. ***A Referential Component:*** a knowledge of the domains of experience and the objects in the world and their relationships (learning about the world of L2).
- D. ***A Sociocultural Component:*** a knowledge of the social rules and norms of interaction between individuals and within institutions, including knowledge of cultural history, and of the relations between social objects.

In sum, learning a foreign language will include:

- 1- Acquiring the syntactic, phonological and semantic rules that we refer to as grammar.
- 2- But will also include, acquiring the ability to distinguish between formal and semi-formal discourse styles, for example.
- 3- Learning about the world as it is in those countries in which we are likely to speak the language.
- 4- And also learning about the socio-cultural rules- the distance to be maintained between interlocutors, for example, or the loudness of voice which is appropriate to particular settings and situations.

Communicative Competence: Case Studies.

Look at the following conversation, and say who the speakers might be, and then explain the misunderstanding between the participants.

Case One:

A: Where is Pee Wee?

B: He sick!

A: You mean he is sick, I am sick, they are sick.

B: Must be an epidemic!

Case Two: Give the context of the situation in which the following could occur:

A: It's cold in here.

B: Leave it open!

Case Three:

An English woman checking her hotel room in a Swiss town asked the waiter if there were 'WCs'? He was puzzled by the term and after chatting with his chum, he decided the letters stood for Wayside Chapel. The following was his reply:

'I take great pleasure in informing you that a 'W.C' is situated nine metres from the house, in the center of a beautiful grove of pine trees. It is capable of holding 22 people and it's only open on Sunday and Thursday.'

Case Four:

Policeman: What's your name, boy?

Doctor: Doctor Poussaint. I'm a physician.

Policeman: What's your first name, boy?

Doctor: Alvin.

Note

The policeman insulted the doctor three times. Firstly, he employed a social selection for race, in addressing him as 'boy'; secondly, he treated the reply as a failure to answer a non-name; thirdly, he repeated the term 'boy' emphasizing the irrelevance of the name Dr Poussaint.

Case Five:

Q: Are you doing anything tonight?

A1: John's coming round. ➡ Question seeking information.

A2: What have you got in mind? ➡ Question perceived as a pre-invitation.

A3: Mind your own business! ➡ Question treated as prying (inquiring too curiously).

Case Six:

Chairman: The question we put to you is do you agree with the unanimous view of the rest of us?

Bill: Laughs !

Comparison between Formal Linguistics and Sociolinguistics

Formal Linguistics	Semantics
1- Internal Study: study of language in isolation. * Language is a system divided into sub-systems: grammar, phonology, and semantics. * Emphasis on similarities.	1- External Study: * Function of language. * Different users and uses: the social and linguistic aspects. * Emphasis on differences.
2-Unit is the sentence and higher units: S ----> NP+VP NP ----> D+N Phrase- Structure Rules. VP ----> V+NP.	2- Unit is the text or paragraph: * Cohesion indicates ties (grammatical clauses with prepositions, coordinations). *Anaphora: preceding sentences. *Cataphora : following sentences.
3- Grammaticality; linguistic competence; it is concerned the formulation of rules (subject and predicate, it is interested by the linguistic context.	3- Appropriateness: It is interested by the social context.